Opening Doors

Grand Opening of The Ramona Apartments
May 19, 2011

• Thank you to the PHB team:
  o Margaret Van Vliet
  o Jacob Fox
  o Komi Kalevor
  o Nate McCoy
  o Siobain Beddow

• Today, we officially open the doors of The Ramona to hard-working families and welcome them to one of Portland’s most vibrant urban neighborhoods.

• We also celebrate the City’s historic commitment – through the use of urban renewal funds – to provide homes for all, regardless of income.

• Thanks to the taxpayers who invested $20 million in this project.
• I’d like to take a moment on this great occasion to reflect on how access to family-friendly housing has changed in a generation – and how far we still have to go.

• 25 years ago, landlords were under no legal obligation to rent to families.

• That changed in 1988 with the passage of the Fair Housing Act Amendments – which brought families and people with disabilities within the coverage of our nation’s civil rights laws.

• In the Senate, Ted Kennedy led the fight to expand civil rights protections.
• In the House, a low-key, principled legislator, guided by his fundamental sense of fairness, brought together an unlikely coalition of realtors and civil rights advocates.

• When Ronald Reagan signed the amendments to the Fair Housing Act, he handed one of the pens to that legislator, my father, Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr.

• When I came to City Hall, I brought that pen with me as a reminder that there is still work to be done.

• As we celebrate the opening of The Ramona today, we know that we are called to complete the work of a previous generation.
• Fair housing audits in Ashland, Beaverton and now Portland remind us that the doors to rental apartments are not open to all.

• Let’s be straight: too many Portlanders are being turned away from housing because of their race, national origin, disability and family status.

• This problem will not be solved by a press conference, or a sound bite, or a lawsuit.

• No, it will take a dedicated community coalition to end discrimination in housing.

• In the weeks ahead, working with partners from across our community and on both sides of the political divide, we will be announcing a bold plan to break down barriers to fair housing.
• Many of you fight these battles every day. You know better than most the price of complacency. I ask for your help in this struggle.

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• This Spring, we have great victories to celebrate: for families at The Ramona, for veterans at Block 49 in South Waterfront, for homeless individuals at Bud Clark Commons.

• I am humbled to be part of the passionate and relentlessly hopeful professionals who worked so hard to conceive these projects and create so many new homes.
• Today we celebrate. Tomorrow we go back to work, energized by this moment and the people we serve.

• Thank you and congratulations.